

2016 Appropriation Act Language

14. Virginia Preschool Initiative Payments

a.1) It is the intent of the General Assembly that a payment estimated at \$70,657,776 the first year and \$70,912,925 the second year from the Lottery Proceeds Fund shall be disbursed by the Department of Education to schools and community-based organizations to provide quality preschool programs for at-risk four-year-olds who are residents of Virginia and unserved by Head Start program funding. In no event shall distributions from the Lottery Proceeds Fund be made directly to community-based or private providers.

2) These state funds and required local matching funds shall be used to provide programs for at-risk four-year-old children, which include quality preschool education, health services, social services, parental involvement and transportation. It shall be the policy of the Commonwealth that state funds and required local matching funds for the Virginia Preschool Initiative not be used for capital outlay. Programs must provide full-day or half-day and, at least, school-year services.

3) The Department of Education, in cooperation with the Council on Child Day Care and Early Childhood Programs, shall establish academic standards that are in accordance with appropriate preparation for students to be ready to successfully enter kindergarten. These standards shall be established in such a manner as to be measurable for student achievement and success. Students shall be required to be evaluated in the fall and in the spring by each participating school division and the school divisions must certify that the Virginia Preschool Initiative program follows the established standards in order to receive the funding for quality preschool education and criteria for the service components. Such guidelines shall be consistent with the findings of the November 1993 study by the Board of Education, the Department of Education, and the Council on Child Day Care and Early Childhood Programs.

4) a) Grants shall be distributed based on an allocation formula providing the state share of a \$6,125 grant for 100 percent of the unserved at-risk four-year-olds in each locality for a full-day program. The number of unserved at-risk four-year-olds in each locality shall be based on the projected number of kindergarten students, updated once each biennium for the Governor's introduced biennial budget. Half-day programs shall operate for a minimum of three hours of classroom instructional time per day, excluding breaks for lunch or recess, and grants to half-day programs shall be funded based on the state share of \$3,062 per unserved at-risk four-year-old in each locality. Full-day programs shall operate for a minimum of five and one-half instructional hours, excluding breaks for meals and recess. No additional state funding is provided for programs operating greater than three hours per day but less than five and one-half hours per day. In determining the state and local shares of funding, the composite index of local ability-to-pay is capped at 0.5000.

b) For new programs in the first year of implementation only, programs operating less than a full school year shall receive state funds on a fractional basis determined by the pro-rata portion of a school year program provided. In determining the prorated state funds to be received, a school year shall be 180 days.

b.1) Any locality which desires to participate in this grant program must submit a proposal through its chief administrator (county administrator or city manager) by May 15 of each year. The chief administrator, in conjunction with the school superintendent, shall identify a lead agency for this program within the locality. The lead agency shall be responsible for developing a local plan for the delivery of quality preschool services to at-risk children which demonstrates the coordination of resources and the combination of funding streams in an effort to serve the greatest number of at-risk four-year-old children.

2) The proposal must demonstrate coordination with all parties necessary for the successful delivery of comprehensive services, including the schools, child care providers, local social services agency, Head Start, local health department, and other groups identified by the lead agency.

3) A local match, based on the composite index of local ability-to-pay, shall be required. For purposes of meeting the local match, localities may use local expenditures for existing qualifying programs, however, at least seventy-five percent of the local match will be cash and no more than twenty-five percent will be in-kind. In-kind contributions are defined as cash outlays that are made by the locality that benefit the program but are not directly charged to the program. The value of fixed assets cannot be considered as an in-kind contribution. Localities shall also continue to pursue and coordinate other funding sources, including child care subsidies. Funds received through this program must be used to supplement, not supplant, any funds currently provided for programs within the locality. However, in the event a locality is prohibited from continuing the previous level of support to programs for at-risk four-year-olds from Title I of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the state and local funds provided in this grants program may be used to continue services to these Title I students. Such prohibition may occur due to amendments to the allocation formula in the reauthorization of ESEA as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 or due to a percentage reduction in a locality's Title I allocation in 2016-2017 or 2017-2018. Any locality so affected shall provide written evidence to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and request his approval to continue the services to Title I students.

c. Local plans must provide clear methods of service coordination for the purpose of reducing the per child cost for the service, increasing the number of at-risk children served and/or extending services for the entire year. Examples of these include:

1) "Wraparound Services" -- methods for combining funds such as child care subsidy dollars administered by local social service agencies with dollars for quality preschool education programs.

2) "Wrap-out Services" - methods for using grant funds to purchase quality preschool services to at-risk four-year-old children through an existing child care setting by purchasing comprehensive services within a setting which currently provides quality preschool education.

3) "Expansion of Service" - methods for using grant funds to purchase slots within existing programs, such as Head Start, which provide comprehensive services to at-risk four-year-old children.

d.1) Local plans must indicate the number of at-risk four-year-old children to be served, and the eligibility criteria for participation in this program shall be consistent with the economic and educational risk factors stated in the 2015-2016 programs guidelines that are specific to: (i) family income at or below 200 percent of poverty, (ii) homelessness, (iii) student's parents or guardians are school dropouts, or (iv) family income is less than 350 percent of federal poverty guidelines in the case of students with special needs or disabilities. Up to 15 percent of a division's slots may be filled based on locally established eligibility criteria so as to meet the unique needs of at-risk children in the community.

2) The Department of Education is directed to compile from each school division the aggregated information as to the number of enrolled students whose families are (i) at or below 130 percent of poverty, and (ii) above 130 percent but below 200 percent of poverty. The Department shall report this information annually, after the application and fall participation reports are submitted to the Department from the school divisions, to the Chairmen of House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees. In addition, the Department will post and maintain the summary information by division on the Department's website in keeping with current student privacy policies.

e.1) The Department of Education and the Council on Child Day Care and Early Childhood Programs shall provide technical assistance for the administration of this grant program to provide assistance to localities in developing a comprehensive, coordinated, quality preschool program for serving at-risk four-year-old children.

2) A pre-application session shall be provided by the Department and the Council on Child Day Care and Early Childhood Programs prior to the proposal deadline. The Department shall provide interested localities with information on models for service delivery, methods of coordinating funding streams, such as funds to match federal IV-A child care dollars, to maximize funding without supplanting existing sources of funding for the provision of services to at-risk four-year-old children. A priority for technical assistance in the design of programs shall be given to localities where the majority of the at-risk four-year-old population is currently unserved.

f. The Department of Education shall include in the program's application package specific information regarding the potential availability of funding for supplemental grants that may be used for one-time expenses, other than capital, related to start-up or expansion of programs, with priority given to proposals for expanding the use of

partnerships with either nonprofit or for-profit providers. Furthermore, the Department is mandated to communicate to all eligible school divisions the remaining available balances in the program's adopted budget, after the fall participation reports have been submitted and finalized for such grants.